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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/981,854	10/18/2001	Volker R. Ulbrich	M-4143/1146.004	8437

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Richard L. Sampson
Sampson & Associates
50 Congress Street
Boston, MA 02109

EXAMINER

BROWN, MICHAEL A

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3764

DATE MAILED: 05/05/2004

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/981,854

Applicant(s)

Volker Culbrich

Examiner

Michael Brown

Group Art Unit

3764

—The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet beneath the correspondence address—

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, such period shall, by default, expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).

Status

- ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _____.
- ☐ This action is FINAL.
- ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- ☒ Claim(s) 1-35 is/are pending in the application.
- Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- ☒ Claim(s) 35 is/are allowed.
- ☒ Claim(s) 1-10, 17-26 and 29-32 is/are rejected.
- ☒ Claim(s) 11-16, 27-28 and 33-34 is/are objected to.
- ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction or election requirement.

Application Papers

- ☐ See the attached Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948.
- ☐ The proposed drawing correction, filed on _____ is ☐ approved ☐ disapproved.
- ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are objected to by the Examiner.
- ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 (a)-(d)

- ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d).
 - ☐ All ☐ Some* ☐ None of the CERTIFIED copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ received in Application No. (Series Code/Serial Number) _____.
 - ☐ received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*Certified copies not received: _____

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s), PTO-1449, Paper No(s) 3
- ☒ Notice of Reference(s) Cited, PTO-892
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948
- ☐ Interview Summary, PTO-413
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application, PTO-152
- ☐ Other _____

Office Action Summary

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-10, 17-26 and 29-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Williams '015 in view of Maude.

Williams '015 discloses in figures 1-8 a method of fabricating an earplug, substantially as claimed. However, Williams does not disclose the method step of disposing markings on the surface of the earplug. Maude teaches in figures 1-8 a method of fabricating an earplug comprising disposing marking 62 that are logos (page 4, section 0038, lines 17-19) onto the earplug, the markings are made by a ink jet printer (page 4, section 0038, lines 1-2), the marking are non-toxic (ink) and the disposing is performed after the cutting (fig. 8). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time that the invention was made that the step of disposing marking as taught by Maude could be used to provide logos on the outer skin of the earplug disclosed by Williams. It is inherent that the cutting step could be performed before the disposing step. It is old and well known in the art to use offset printing to form a logo on a surface.

Allowable Subject Matter

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Claims 11-16, 27-28 and 33-34 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 35 is allowed.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Falco and McLean, each discloses an earplug with disposed marking. Although each of these references discloses method steps recited in the claims, neither was used to reject any claims, in the first office action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Brown whose telephone number is 703-308-2682. The examiner can normally be reached on 5:30 am-4:00 pm Monday-Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Nicholas Lucchesi can be reached on 703-308-2698. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

M. Brown
April 26, 2004



MICHAEL A. BROWN
PRIMARY EXAMINER